IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims to read as follows:

1. (currently amended) A method of preparing an imidazolium salt comprising:

(a) synthesizing a diimine compound; and

(b) subjecting the diimine compound to ring closure conditions at or below room temperature, wherein:

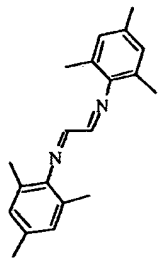
paraformaldehyde and a protic acid provide the ring closure conditions.

2. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein:

the diimine compound is from the group consisting of 1, 3, diaryldiazabutadiene, 1, 3, dialkyldiazabutadiene, and 1, 3, arylalkyldiazabutadiene~~; and~~

~~paraformaldehyde and a protic acid provide the ring closure conditions~~.

3. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the diimine compound is ~~1~~



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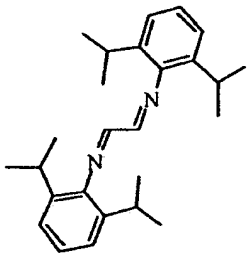
4. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the diimine compound is ~~3~~



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5. (cancelled)

6. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the salt includes a counterion.

7. (original) The method of claim 6, wherein the counterion is determined by the acid used for ring closure.

8. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the diimine compound is synthesized at room temperature.

9. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein between steps (a) and (b) the diimine compound is mixed with a solvent from the group consisting of: methanol, ethyl acetate, ethanol, tetrahydrofuran, and toluene.

10. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the synthesis of the diimine compound and the ring closure are carried out in air.

11. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein no solvent pre-drying steps are performed.

12. (original) The salt prepared by the method of claim 2 when the diimine compound is 1, 3, arylalkyldiazabutadiene.

13. (Withdrawn) The salt prepared by the method of claim 4.

14. (Withdrawn) The imidazolium salt 1,3-Bis(2,6-diisopropylphenyl)imidazolium chloride.

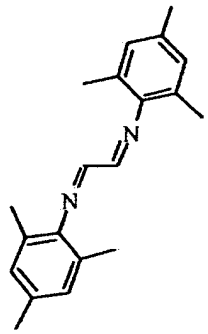
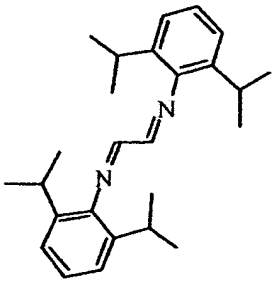
15. (previously presented) The invention of claim 1, wherein the protic acid is HCl, HBF_4, or HPF_6.

16. (previously presented) The invention of claim 1, wherein the protic acid is HCl.

17. (original) The method of claim 9, wherein the solvent is ethyl acetate.

18. (currently amended) A method of preparing an imidazolium salt comprising:

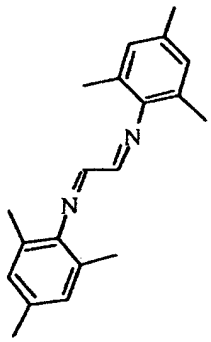
(a) providing a diimine compound from the group consisting of ~~1 and 3~~

 and 

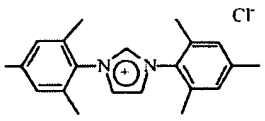
;

(b) mixing the diimine compound with a solvent from the group consisting of: methanol, ethyl acetate, ethanol, tetrahydrofuran, and toluene; and

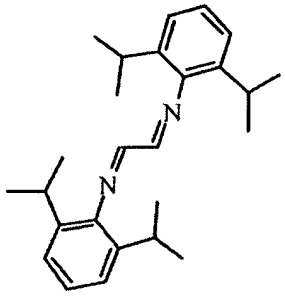
(c) at or below room temperature, mixing the diimine compound and solvent with paraformaldehyde and a protic acid.

19. (currently amended) The method of claim 18, wherein the diimine compound is ~~1~~ 

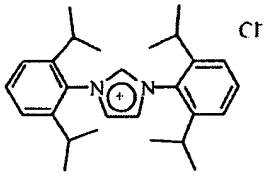
and the salt is ~~2~~



20. (currently amended) The method of claim 18, wherein the diimine compound is ~~3~~



and the salt is ~~4~~



21. (cancelled)